

TRUST IN THE LORD

Psalm 146

Introduction:

One of the principles that God has given us over and over in His Word is the importance of trust in Him. At the same time, one of the things that we, as humans, seem to find hardest to do, is to trust in Him. Somehow, it seems that, by nature, we tend to look toward human capability to get us through difficult times or difficult tasks.

In Psalm 146 we find again the admonition to look to the Lord as the source of strength and courage and power to do the things that need to be done in all of our circumstances.

Psalm 146 is one of a series of songs of praise. These last five psalms (146 – 150) all begin and end with the phrase, “Praise the Lord!” Literally, in the Hebrew, the term is “Hallelujah!” That word is at the beginning and the end of each of these psalms. None of these psalms have any title identifying the author, so we do not know who wrote them.

But this psalm is more than a psalm of praise to God. It is a call to see God’s hand of deliverance. The overall theme of the psalm is that the Lord is the only sure hope for God’s suffering people.

So let’s have a look at this psalm, written by an unknown psalmist.

I. A Commitment to Praise vv. 1-2

v. 1 is a call to praise – a personal call to the writer’s own soul. It is reminiscent of Psalms 103-104 – “Bless the Lord, o my soul...”

But in v. 2 we see the commitment of the psalmist to a life of praise. There is no greater or more valuable occupation for any human being than to give his life to the praise of God.

In the little book of Lamentations, written by the prophet Jeremiah, we read, “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” (Lamentations 3:22-23 ESV) What better reason could there be to

devote your life to praising God. Every new day is a new opportunity to enjoy the mercies and the blessings of God.

But the psalm takes a sudden turn in v. 3. It becomes apparent that, even though he is committed to praising God, all is not well in the psalmist’s life. Either that or he is looking at the struggles in the lives of others. He begins to talk about where we should go and who we should look to for hope and help.

II. The Folly of Misplaced Trust vv. 3-4

vv. 3-4 speak of the folly of misplaced trust. Read the verses. The message is, don’t look to human strength and wisdom for your help. Princes and powerful warriors are not what you need. There is no salvation in them, the psalmist assures us. Their lives are just as temporary as ours, and when they die, their plans and power go with them.

God warned his people many times about the dangers of trusting in people for protection or strength. And many times His people failed to heed those warnings.

In the latter days of Samuel, we read how the people came to Samuel, “and said to him, ‘Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.’” (1 Sam. 8:5) Their trust was in a human king, and look where it got them.

In the days of King Ahaz, he went to the king of Assyria for help. “So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, ‘I am your servant and your son. Come up and rescue me from the hand of the king of Syria and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are attacking me.’ ... And the king of Assyria listened to him. The king of Assyria marched up against Damascus and took it, carrying its people captive to Kir...” (2 Kings 16:7,9) But the result of that was that the remainder of the life of Ahaz, he was under the control of the king of Assyria.

Read Psalm 147:10-11 – God is not impressed with the strength of men or their horses or chariots. Over and over, God made it clear that it was folly to put your trust in men. It would lead only to ruin.

III. The Blessedness of Trusting in God vv. 5-10

But in vv. 5-10 we have another twist as the psalmist points our eyes toward the one who can help us in our time of need. Read v. 5-6.

The blessed person is the one who looks to God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Yahweh, the God of Jacob, is the very one who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them.

Those words are from Ex. 20:11, *“For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”* His power is unlimited; and he has the character that keeps faith forever.

In vv. 7-9 the psalmist gives us a whole list of those to whom the Lord lends His help. Remember the old saying, “God helps those who help themselves.” There are many who actually believe that is a biblical quote. In fact, the opposite is true. God helps those who cannot help themselves. Look at these verses and the people listed here.

- He executes justice for ***the oppressed***;
- He gives food to ***the hungry***.
- He sets ***the prisoners*** free;
- He opens the eyes of ***the blind***.
- He lifts up ***those who are bowed down***;
- He watches over ***the sojourners***;
- He upholds ***the widow*** and ***the fatherless***,

The Scriptures remind us often of the way in which God comes to the aid of the weak and the downtrodden, the outcasts and the forgotten. God extends his helping hand to those who can do nothing for themselves, and more than that, know they are helpless.

I am reminded of the words of Jesus in the NT. In Matthew 5, in that section of the Sermon on the Mount that we call the beatitudes, He says, blessed are the poor in spirit... those who mourn... the meek... the persecuted... Why? Because they will receive the kingdom of heaven... be comforted... inherit the earth... see God.

God has always been on the side of the downtrodden. But more than that, He is on the side of those who reach out to Him, rather than

trusting in themselves or their friends or their kings or princes. He is on the side of the righteous.

Did you notice the two phrases in these verses that I left out? In the midst of this list of the groups of people whom the Lord helps, it also says, “The Lord loves the righteous... (v. 8), but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.” (v. 9)

How often is it that the one who seems to have no need, who live their lives with a self-sufficient attitude, find themselves on the side which is against God? They get no assistance from the Lord, because they do not think they need it.

But for those who have nothing to offer, who recognize their own weakness and inability, they find God waiting, ready and willing to help when they call out to Him.

The Psalm ends where it began—with a cry of praise to God. Read v. 10 and comment on the faithfulness and eternal nature of God’s rule and assistance.

Conclusion:

This psalm begins and ends with a call to praise. But in between there is a serious matter to consider.

“The Lord loves the righteous...but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.”

About 2½ months ago, we started this series of messages on the Psalms with a look at Psalm 1 and a message entitled, Two Ways to Live. That psalm ended with the words, “...the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.” (Ps. 1:6)

Here we are at the end of our series on the Psalms, standing at the same fork in the road—the way of the righteous or the way of the wicked. Which road are you taking?

The Lord is faithful; he is ready to help those who cannot help themselves but call out to him. Will you do that today?